DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 187 415 JC 800 372

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TITLE Shock Waves: Recommendations for Meeting the Needs of "New" Students.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 7p.
JOURNAL CIT Chabot College Journal; v4 n1 p19-23 Win-Spr 1980

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Academic Standards; Ancillary School Services; *Community Colleges; Community Information Services; Educational Counseling; Educational Diagnosis; *High Risk Students; *Learning Problems; Minimum Competencies; *Nontraditional Students; Referral; Remedial Instruction; *School Holding Power; Student Needs; Student Personnel Services; Two Year Colleges; Two Year College Students
IDENTIFIERS Chabot College CA

ABSTRACT

The last three years at Chabot College have been characterized by a rapid and continuing increase in the number of non-traditional students; an increase which may be accounted for by numerous social, political, and educational conditions. In order to determine the extent and nature of the learning problems which many of these non-traditional students exhibit, an ad hoc committee was established and charged with developing recommendations to meet student needs. Their suggestions included specific ways of achieving the following: (1) instructors should uphold minimum academic standards by explaining course expectancies, consulting with remedial skills faculty, and referring students who do not demonstrate minimum skills to appropriate departments for improvement; (2) Chabot should help students determine the probability of their success; (3) student academic and non-academic needs should be identified and met by faculty and support staff who are sensitive to the problems of non-traditional students; (4) the student should be allowed to repeat courses a reasonable number of times; and (5) student referral committees made up of faculty and counselors should be established to coordinate referral services. Progress toward the implementation of these recommendations has included a review of course outlines and the testing of a formula to measure achievement. Recommendations were also developed for state action. (JP)

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ED187415

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Published originally in the Winter/Spring 1980 issue of

"Chabot College Journal"

JC 800 372

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Shockwaves:
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEETING THE NEEDS OF "NEW" STUDENTS

by Lee Hinkley

A college dean looks at the status of efforts to meet the needs of "new students" at Chabot College in light of a task force report written just prior to Proposition 13, and at a time when the impact of a new tax initiative is still uncertain. Dr. Hinckley also briefly poses some questions which still remain unanswered –DSM

As at most community colleges in California, the past three years at Chabot College have been characterized by a rapid and continuing rise in the number of "new" students throughout the curriculum[1] The shockwaves from this development continue to alter the educational landscape of the College, as evidenced by the relatively new learning skills program in our Language Arts Division, the recent resurrection of a modified tutorials program, a substantial growth in our ESL enrollments, new facilities and programs for the physically handicapped, the introduction of modular or mastery learning programs (especially at Valley Campus), new colloquia and independent study courses designed for career orientation for citizens who are returning to college after a prolonged absence, and the introduction of courses for teaching sign language.

A thoughtful list of the reasons for this influx of "new" students might include the following: (1) the continuing emergence of equal rights for women as a national issue and a related boom in re-entry programs for women, (2) a dramatic increase (particularly in California) in the number of bilingual students migrating from Vietnam, the Philippines, Portugal,Cambodia, and other countries embroiled in either political, economic, or social turmoil, (3) a documented decline in the number of elementary and high school students mastering basic communications skills, (4) an improvement in diagnostic and remedial techniques for helping students who suffer from complex learning handicaps such as dyslexia, or receptive and expressive language problems, (5) recent legislation advancing the cause of those who are physically handicapped, and (6) a trend among students to delimit their contact with curriculum in the Humanities, Language Arts, and Physical Sciences—presumably to expedite entry into the labor market.[2]

Task Force

As the college began responding to the needs of a growing population of students with educational handicaps, an Ad/Hoc Task Force of twenty faculty members and administrators[3] was formed in 1976 for the purpose of determining

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[1]A definition applied to, among other, (1) bilingual students for whom English is a second language, (2) adults returning to college after a prolonged absence, (3) students with reading levels below the eighth grade, and (4) students generally described as educationally handicapped, including those with physical and emotional handicaps but excluding the mentally retarded.

[2]An incipient growth in the number of units required beyond established levels for Associate of Arts Degrees in technical/vocational majors could contribute to this trend.

[3]The list of Task Force members appears at the end of this article.

(1) the extent and nature of the learning problems of educationally handicapped students, (2) whether Chabot College would assist these students and if so, how, and (3) how to best identify and counsel such students. In 1978, after considerable subcommittee work and discussion, the Task Force submitted the following policy statement and recommendations:

A. POLICY: *Meeting the Unique and Special Needs of Students*

Chabot College is dedicated to defining and meeting the unique and special educational needs of its students. The College recognizes that it is often necessary to devote unique and special effort to provide relevant programs for students who have such needs.

Recognizing that there are limits to the resources available, the College will determine the allocation of time and resources which may, however, realistically be dedicated to meeting the needs of students, and in return expects from students a commitment to learn.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS: *Standards, Performance, Services, Progress and Counseling*

1. Since reading, writing, and mathematics proficiency are essential for success in college and since Chabot College has developed a variety of resources to help students achieve this proficiency, each instructor is encouraged to uphold appropriate minimum academic standards for each course taught, by:
   a. collaborating with colleagues in developing uniform standards within each academic area;
   b. analyzing and stating course content and expectancies;
   c. consulting with faculty in reading, writing, and mathematics areas;
   d. evaluating and grading student performance;
   e. explaining expectancies to students; and/or
   f. referring students who do not demonstrate minimum proficiency to appropriate areas for assistance (counseling and/or subject areas).
2. The College should help students to determine their probability of success in meeting appropriate minimum academic performance, by:
   a. providing staff and computer assistance to enable large group testing and scoring of the English Placement Test and Math Test for all day and evening students;
   b. revising existing remedial programs and counseling services to meet n: demands;
   c. identifying, early in the quarter, those students exhibiting severe di: ficulties in meeting course requirements, even though they may have me: the test requirements;
   d. referring students needing help to a designated agency (perhaps in counseling and/or an appropriate remedial center) for further diagnosis, needs assessment, and counseling;
   e. providing orientation programs and academic advisement for both day and evening students;

f. stating clearly program requirements and course prerequisites in the catalog; and/or
g. informing students of specific reading, writing, and mathematics requirements for successful completion of each course.

3. The college should provide services to help students choose realistic courses of study and achieve the levels of proficiency necessary to succeed in those courses of study by:
   a. sensitizing faculty and staff to unique and special needs of the "non-traditional" student, to aid in the development of awareness, involvement, and support;
   b. developing a profile of each student's academic and non-academic needs, and providing needed services and/or referrals including testing and placement services, special assistance with program planning, special assistance with admissions and registration prodedures, and individual follow-up with tutorials and remedial assistance;
   c. providing strong support through counselors, paraprofessionals, and peer advisors on a group and individual basis;
   d. implementing a system to clarify the descriptions of courses in the college catalog, so that a reading performance level can be identified to aid students in the selection of appropriate courses; and/or
   e. seeking funds from the Chancellor's Office, the State Department of Health, and the Office of Developmental Disabilities to increase specific diagnostic and remedial services for students who would benefit from off-campus community programs;

4. The college should establish a reasonable limit to the number of times that students may repeat courses and/or programs preparing them for minimum academic standards, by:
   a. implementing a "progress ratio formula" as a method of measuring academic progress[4]; and/or
   b. providing mandatory counseling, including possible regulation of a student's program and restriction on the number of times he or she may repeat a course, if the student's quarterly progress ratio is .50 or less.

5. The college should provide counseling and referral service to students who do not meet academic success by:
   a. organizing ad/hoc student referral committees comprised of counselors, referring faculty members (if any) and, if the committee is recommending placement in another off-campus educational program, a representative from that program;
   b. conducting a survey to determine those community agencies or institutions that are available and willing to cooperate with Chabot College in pro-

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[4]Typically, a student's academic standing is stated in terms of grade point average, which is calculated by dividing cumulative grade points earned by the total number of units completed. Numerically, the grade point average ranges from 0 to 4. A progress ratio, on the other hand, reflects the proportion of units completed with A, B, C, D, E, F, N, and S grades plus units terminated with the symbol W. Numerically, the progress ratio ranges from 0 to 1. As the number of non-progress grades (I, N and F) and symbols (W) increases, the progress ration will decrease toward 0.

viding educational services for students who do not meet with academic success; and/or

c. obtaining follow-up data on the progress of students who have been referred to another educational program.

Although some of the above recommendations speak to procedures which had already been implemented, they were included because they were perceived by the Task Force as either an important part of an over-all program to serve the needs of "new" students, or required more emphasis to be effective.

College Resources

The Task Force recognized that decisions as to which recommendations (if any) should be adopted would be determined by another process. Therefore, it was imperative that each recommendation be developed with reasonable consideration given to the college's human and monetary resources. While much of this dialogue was overshadowed by the subsequent passage of the Jarvis-Gann Property Tax Initiative (Proposition 13), some of the recommendations have nevertheless been partially fulfilled.

For example, the college is in the process of reviewing and updating all course outlines; the Curriculum Committee has established more effective procedures for the development and evaluation of proposals; faculty members in the Writing Center are meeting with faculty in other disciplines to establish ways in which the Center can help students improve the quality of their work in doing specific writing assignments of other classes; and the Office of Admissions and Records has completed a study of how a progress ratio formula for measuring academic progress would effect the general student population. The results of this study support the recommendation of the Task Force.

Progress

While other recommendations have yet to be reconciled, one can see from the above developments that since the task force issued its report we have traveled the path of progress much farther than many of us realized toward meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities. Meanwhile, we have also witnessed a much accelerated effort, state-wide, to define and address these needs, with considerable focus given to the need to improve student proficiency in basic skills. In this regard, the Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Basic Skills recently concluded a field survey of basic skills in California Community Colleges.[5] Based on the survey results, the Committee has made the following recommendations:

State Recommendations

1. A state-wide minimum level of proficiency in writing skills should be established.
2. Credit should be granted toward the Associate Degree when competency in writing has been demonstrated, either through course completion or by proficiency testing.

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[5]Basic skills, as defined by the Advisory Committee, consist of those fundamental or essential academic skills which are necessary to function in today's complex world and which are also necessary for student success in academic and/or occupational programs in the community college.

3. Diagnostic testing programs which include a writing sample should be supported by state funds.
4. Each college should establish a system of advisement and counseling to assist students enrolling in English classes.
5. The use of paraprofessionals should be encouraged and continued whenever possible.
6. Grants for staff development in the teaching of writing skills should be provided through the Chancellor's Office.
7. State resources should be made available to enable colleges to carry out follow-up studies of students who have taken basic English courses.
8. Evaluation of writing programs should be a continuing process.
9. The teaching of effective writing should be considered by colleges as the responsibility of all disciplines.

As one might expect, many of the recommendations of the Chabot Task Force are in harmony with those advocated by the Basic Skills Advisory Committee.

More to do

However, some of the progress we have made toward implementing the recommendations of the task force has evolved from necessity or coincidence in meeting other requirements and needs of the college. While such progress is no less welcome, some recommendations will require a more systematic approach to determine whether they can and should be implemented, who should implement them, and how and when they should be implemented. The answers to these questions will be important to our continued efforts to meet the needs of "new" students.

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JUL 18 1980